



Leave Me Alone!

How to Slow the Flow of Unwanted Communications

CONSUMER INFORMATION SHEET 5

Many people today feel overwhelmed by the volume of sales offers they receive at home. You may not be able to completely stop the flow of telephone, fax, mail, or email solicitations, but you can reduce it. You can avoid getting on some marketing lists in the first place. And you can take steps to get off many of the lists you are already on.

Staying Off Marketing Lists

- ☐ Do not fill out consumer surveys or marketing surveys.
- ☐ Do not fill out surveys attached to product “warranty registration cards.” You do not have to complete and return the cards to enjoy your warranty rights. Just keep a copy of the sales receipt.¹
- ☐ Do not fill out sweepstakes entry forms.
- ☐ When you give money to a charity or other group, enclose a note asking them not to share, sell or rent your name to any other organization. Do the same when you order from a catalog.
- ☐ Exercise your opt-out rights wherever you can. Your financial institutions are required to notify you of your right to stop them from sharing your personal financial information with outside companies.² Read the privacy policies of Web sites. They often give you an opportunity to opt out of receiving email ads or having your information shared with other companies.

Telemarketing Calls

- ☐ Sign up for the national Do Not Call Registry. Most telemarketers should not call your number once it has been on the registry for three months. If one does, you can file a complaint at the Do Not Call Web site. You can register your home or mobile phone for free. Your registration will be effective for five years. Register by phone at 1-888-382-1222. Or register online at www.donotcall.gov.
- ☐ Political and charitable organizations may still call you even if you’ve signed up for the Do Not Call Registry. If you tell them not to call you again, they are required to honor your request. If not, you can complain to the Federal Trade Commission at the Web site above.



- ❑ Get an unlisted and unpublished phone number. Unlisted numbers usually get fewer unwanted calls. Or call your telephone company's business office and ask to have your name removed from its street address directories. Companies typically charge a monthly fee for these services.
- ❑ Watch out for do-not-call scams. They may try to steal personal information by posing as a state do-not-call program.
- ❑ For more information on reducing telemarketing calls, see Privacy Rights Clearinghouse Fact Sheet 5 at www.privacyrights.org, EPIC's information at www.epic.org/privacy/telemarketing, and Junkbusters' tips and sample letters at www.junkbusters.com/telemarketing.html.

Junk Mail

- ❑ Call 888-5OPTOUT (888-567-8688) to stop most unsolicited pre-approved credit offers. Or opt out online at www.optoutprescreen.com. This is good for five years, or you can make it permanent.
- ❑ Sign up for the Direct Marketing Association's Mail Preference Service. In three to four months, you should receive less junk mail. This is a voluntary industry program. It will not stop all junk mail. Sign up online at <https://www.dmaconsumers.org/cgi/offmailing>, for a \$1 fee. Or sign up by writing to Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 282, Carmel, NY 10512. Enclose a check or money order for \$1, payable to DMA. It's good for five years.
- ❑ For more information on stopping junk mail, see Privacy Rights Clearinghouse Fact Sheet 4 at www.privacyrights.org or Junkbusters' tips at www.junkbusters.com/junkmail.html.

Junk Faxes

- ❑ Federal law bans sending unsolicited advertisements to a fax machine without first getting the consent of the receiver, unless the sender has an established business relationship with the recipient. It also requires senders of fax advertisements to include a notice and contact information informing the recipient of how to opt out of future such faxes.³
- ❑ For more information on stopping junk faxes, see Junkbusters' tips and sample letters at www.junkbusters.com/fax.html. Also see the Federal Communications Commission's information sheet at www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/unwantedfaxes.html.



Junk E-mail (Spam)

- ❑ Never respond to spam. Never buy anything advertised in spam. Protect your email address as you would other personal information. Do not post your email address on your Web site. Use a separate email address for newsgroups.
- ❑ Sign up with the Direct Marketing Association's e-Mail Preference Service at www.dmaconsumers.org/offemaillist.html. It's free and it's good for two years. This is a voluntary industry program that will not stop all junk email.
- ❑ Report spam to your Internet service provider (ISP). California law allows ISPs to sue those who send spam from its network or to its subscribers in violation of its policy.⁴
- ❑ Forward spam to the Federal Trade Commission: spam@uce.gov. For information on the federal CAN-SPAM Act and other tips, see <http://www.ftc.gov/spam/>.
- ❑ For more tips on controlling spam, see Privacy Rights Clearinghouse Fact Sheet 20 (Anti-Spam Resources) at www.privacyrights.org or Junkbusters' tips, including how to track down spammers and sample letters, at www.junkbusters.com/junkemail.html.

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NOTES

¹California Civil Code Section 1793.1(a)(1) requires a warranty or product registration card to contain a statement that failure to complete and return the card does not diminish a consumer's warranty rights. For text of the law, go to www.privacy.ca.gov/code/cc1793.1.htm.

²For more information, see the Financial Privacy page on the Office of Privacy Protection Web site at www.privacy.ca.gov/financial/financial.htm.

³The federal Telephone Consumer Protection Act (including the 2005 Junk Fax Prevention Act amendments), 47 U.S. Code § 227.

⁴California Business and Professions Code sections 17529 and following and 17538.45 regulate "spam," unsolicited commercial e-mail. Section 17529.5 concerns unsolicited commercial e-mails with misleading or falsified headers or information, and includes penalties. It applies to e-mail sent to or from a California e-mail address. It authorizes the recipient, an e-mail service provider, or the Attorney General to bring an action for actual damages and liquidated damages of \$1,000 per e-mail ad sent in violation, up to \$1 million per incident. It also authorizes attorney's fees and costs to a prevailing plaintiff. Section 17538.45 gives an e-mail service provider the right to sue those who send spam from its network or to its subscribers. Service providers can get civil damages up to \$25,000 per day plus attorney fees. For the text of California and federal spam laws, see the Office of Privacy Protection's Privacy Laws Web page.